

HAVING RESPONSIBLE POWER LEADS TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT?  
THE EXPLANATORY ROLE OF MORAL LICENSING

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## HAVING RESPONSIBLE POWER LEADS TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

### THE EXPLANATORY ROLE OF MORAL LICENSING

Feeling powerful or possessing power over someone is often shown in the sexual harassment literature as an antecedent. Indeed, power can be construed in a self-focused manner or in a responsibility-focused manner. Tost (2015) theorized that powerholders who construe their power as responsibility should then act for the benefit of others. However, a recent study by Stockdale, Gilmer, and Dinh (2019) found the opposite effect. Specifically, they found that priming responsibility-focused power increased the intention to sexually harass, speculating that priming such powers may have created a “moral license” (Miller & Effron, 2010) to engage in sexual harassment. The purpose of the present study is to extend their findings by examining the role of moral licensing. I hypothesize that participants who are in the responsibility-focused power priming condition will engage in sexual harassment proclivities through a serial mediation of communal feelings and moral licensing (moral crediting and moral credentialing). Results confirm that communal feelings and moral crediting serially mediate the relationship between responsibility-focused power and sexual harassment proclivities. The hypothesized role of moral credentialing was not supported. Findings in this study provides a potential explanation for the paradoxical findings of responsibility-focused power in Stockdale et al. (2019)’s study. This study also emphasizes the importance of understanding responsibility-focused power in sexual harassment indices and the potential the ironic effects of having such power via moral crediting.

Margaret S. Stockdale, Ph.D, Chair

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## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

Workplace sexual harassment is harmful on an individual (Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007), team (Glomb, Richman, Hulin, Drawsgow, Schneider, & Fitzgerald, 1997), and organizational levels (Raver & Gelfand, 2005). Such experiences in the workplace can lead to psychological distress (e.g., anger, irritability, helplessness) and affect workplace outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and turnover), especially among women (Laband and Lentz, 1998; Schneider, Swan, and Fitzgerald, 1997). Sexual harassment (SH) will likely continue to rise, especially since the hashtag #MeToo went viral in October 2017, and the #TimesUp movement followed shortly after in January 2018, as such large-scale social media movements increase the awareness of SH and related misconduct in the workplace (Amber et al., 2019).

Motivation for perpetrators to engage in sexual harassment in the workplace has been studied for years, with most literature implicating power dynamics, for example, how powerholders (e.g., supervisors) benefit from such power, and the effects that powerholders have on those who do not hold power (e.g., Cleveland and Kerst, 1993; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012). Notably, this literature has shown that powerholders influence others in order to achieve a self-interested goal. However, power has also been examined as a source of responsibility towards others and how power may benefit others. For example, Chen, Lee-Chai, and Bargh (2001) found that those who have a desire to connect with others in life used their power to achieve goals that benefitted others, not just themselves. In another study, research participants who were primed to feel powerful were more likely than others to intervene when they witnessed incivility toward their subordinate. (Hershcovis, Neville,



Reich, Christie, Cortina, & Shan, 2017). Yet, Stockdale, Gilmer, and Dinh (2019) recently found that priming responsibility-focused power increased the intention to sexually harass, speculating that priming such powers may have created a “moral license” (Miller & Effron, 2010) to engage in SH.

Moral licensing is a form of “psychological balancing” in which people balance behavior, thoughts, and/or attitudes to maintain a consistent view of themselves. Moral licensing occurs when the actor has engaged in morally commendable behavior in the past and then feels licensed to engage in morally dubious behavior; i.e. the good balances the bad (Miller & Effron, 2010). An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the case of Eliot Spitzer, a previous Governor of New York who was championed as “The People’s Lawyer,” who promised to reduce government corruption (Eimicke & Shacknai, 2008). He was also seen as an ally, as he worked with women’s rights and anti-human-trafficking groups (<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/12/nyregion/12prostitute.html>). Yet, a year into his administration, he was found to be connected to a prostitution ring. The question that will be explored in detail in this research, then, is whether empowering individuals to use power responsibly to help others will create a license to later transgress, particularly in regard to SH.

In this paper, I will review the literature on SH and power (self-focused vs. responsibility-focused<sup>1</sup>), tying these two constructs together. Then, I will introduce moral licensing mechanisms, particularly moral crediting and moral credentialing, to examine their roles, if any, on facilitating SH intentions among responsibility-focused powerful

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<sup>1</sup> “Other-focused” has been used in past power literature (for examples, see Schmid Mast et al 2009 and Galinsky et al 2006). However, most recent literature within the past decade have used responsibility-focused, so I will be using this term throughout the document.

holders. Finally, I will present the current study utilizing these frameworks to examine whether and how moral licensing plays a role in inducing sexually harassing conduct among powerful people who might otherwise use their power to benefit others.

### **Sexual Harassment**

The definition of sexual harassment varies within different fields, most notably in the field of law and psychology. The legal definition, as outlined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has been amended numerous times since its release in the 1980s, but the EEOC recently defined SH as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (29 CFR §1604.11 2016)

Outside of the legal definition, others emphasize a psychological definition of SH, which assesses an individual's perceptions or experiences (e.g., a victim or an observer of SH), regardless of whether or not the behavior meets the legal criteria. A team of researchers at the University of Illinois, led by Louise Fitzgerald, explored how people experience SH regardless of whether it meets legal criteria and regardless of whether it is self-labeled as such, in order to comprehensively understand its antecedents, consequences, and boundary conditions (Fitzgerald, Shullman, Bailey, Richards,

Swecker, Gold, Ormerod, & Weitzman, 1988; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995a; Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995b). Defining SH as “unwanted sex-related behavior at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her<sup>2</sup> resources, or threatening her well-being” (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997), the Illinois team delineated three prominent experiential forms of sexual harassment: gender harassment (e.g. sexist jokes), unwanted sexual attention (e.g., uncomfortable eye gazes or staring), and sexual coercion (e.g., wanting sexual favors in exchange for a promotion) (Fitzgerald et al, 1995a).

Over the years, the difficulty in concretely defining sexual harassment has been due to the ambiguity of what behaviors can be considered SH, and how individual differences or individual perceptions can further complicate what constitutes sexual harassment (for a review, see Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). However, scholars across disciplines agree that SH has serious detrimental effects on the individual, organizational, and societal level, which can be seen in decades of empirical and theoretical research demonstrating and understanding its prevalence and harm (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; MacKinnon, 1979; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007).

In a prominent book, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination*, MacKinnon (1979) attempted to integrate sexual harassment with legal theory, arguing that sexual harassment is not simply an expression of men’s sexual attraction to women. Instead, sexual harassment is due to more broad and complex societal reasons surrounding men’s dominance over women (i.e., maintaining the

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<sup>2</sup> “Her” was used as part of the definition in early literature. However, over the years, evidence of sexual harassment towards other groups exist as well (e.g., heterosexism, Pichler, 2012; not-man-enough harassment, Stockdale et al., 1999).

patriarchy), thus leading, among other things, to demands for sexual favors in the workplace. Ultimately, MacKinnon (1979) encouraged us to view sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination. This view was further supported by Franke's (1997) synthesis of sexual harassment theories with legal theory in which she concluded that sexual harassment is a "technology of sexism" (p. 693). As Franke explained, through a system of social norms, sexual harassment perpetuates sexist ideals and accomplishes sexist goals that identify "men as sexual conquerors and women as sexually conquered" (p. 693). Both MacKinnon's (1979) and Franke's (1997) view of sexual harassment as a consequence of a sexist and patriarchal culture is further supported by Tangri, Burt, and Johnson's (1982) three explanatory models of SH: the natural/biological model, the organizational model, and the socio-cultural model. The natural/biological model assumes that there is a natural attraction of one individual to another, motivating one to pursue that attraction in a sexual manner. The organizational model states that opportunity for sexual harassment occurs due to organizational structures (e.g., hierarchy), where power may be used coercively against underlings, sometimes in the form of sexual harassment. The socio-cultural model states that sexual harassment is due to sex differences in power and status within society such that the existing status quo has women as inferior to men. In Tangri et al.'s (1982) test of all three models, one important finding was that women were two times more likely than men to experience sexual harassment from their supervisors due to a power differential, a point that I will revisit later in this paper.

To further explore organizational conditions that exacerbate the potential for sexual harassment to occur, Gutek (1985) forwarded sex-role spillover theory (Gutek,

1985). She argued that the unequal sex ratios in a workplace reify societal gender roles and injunctions placed on those who violate gender role expectations. Specifically, she argued that in female-dominated work contexts, women's roles are often traditional and subordinate to men's, hence men view women in such roles in sexualized terms. In male-dominated environments, female tokens or pioneers are perceived to violate traditional feminine gender roles and thus become targets of harassment to punish their norm violations. For example, for a male-dominated work environment, employees are expected to act in more aggressive ways, whereas employees in female-dominated work environments are expected to act in more nurturing ways. Thus, when women in a male-dominated job do not act in congruence to their male counterparts, these women likely to be subjected to a sexually harassing work environment, as their identity of being a woman is much more salient, which can lead to sexual objectification (Gutek & Cohen, 1987). Paradoxically, if a woman is one of very few female employees in a male-dominated job, she may be expected to act consistent to female-like traits, as her femininity would be much more salient when the ratio of women to men are much more skewed. Thus, in this context, if she does not fulfil the traditional female role, she is also likely to become a target of harassment (Gutek & Cohen, 1987). Similarly, if male employees in a male-dominated workplace do not act in ways consistent with stereotypical male traits, they are also likely a target of sexual harassment by other men (same-sex sexual harassment; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999).

Berdahl (2007) unified and extended these cross-disciplinary theories of sexual harassment into what many scholars now call sex-based harassment (SBH). For Berdahl SBH “derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual's sex,” (p.

651) and is motivated by the individual's desire to enhance or protect their status in society. Berdahl's definition broadens sex harassment motives beyond sexual motives. Berdahl (2007) posited that sexual motivation is not an adequate explanation for SBH in the workplace, and that men and women are also motivated to engage in SBH of others when their status is threatened. Such threat can occur when group distinctions are challenged (e.g., women acting in male-associated characteristics) or emphasized (e.g., a man has to prove he is masculine enough to be worthy of membership in his own sex). Further, Berdahl (2007) asserted that SBH is most likely used among the powerful to maintain the gender hierarchy in both society and in the workplace, thus supporting the notion that power differences are a key predictor in harassment incidents, as briefly mentioned earlier in this paper.

Berdahl's (2007) focus on SBH as a mechanism to maintain gender hierarchy harkened back to Cleveland and Kerst's (1993) discussion of the sources and forms of power that underlie SBH motives: societal power, organizational power, and interpersonal/personal power. Societal power stems from societal norms which accept men at the top of the hierarchy (the powerful) and women at the bottom (the powerless). Organizational power is also based on societal norms in which men are typically more powerful and hold higher status roles in organizations which can exert influence; whereas women are often less powerful and can wield little to no influence. Both sources and forms of power can be seen as the underlying mechanisms in extant SH theories. However, Cleveland and Kerst (1993) also mentioned interpersonal/personal power, in which the way power is exerted depends on the attributes and characteristics of the one who holds the power (the powerful or the powerholder) and the powerholder's target. The

source of interpersonal/personal power and how it impacts SBH outcomes may be further explained by Pryor's (1992) Person X Situation model of SBH.

The Person X Situation model delineates predictors of SBH when analyzing situational factors (i.e., organizational norms allowing SBH) and individual factors (i.e., having a disposition to sexually harass). Specifically, the model emphasizes how such individual factors can be triggered when placed in a situation where sexually harassing behaviors may seem acceptable to enact and where the motives of SH can be disguised (Pryor, 1992). Pryor and his colleagues argued that men who possess personality traits and attitudes that predispose them to sexually harassing conduct, such as social dominance and sexism, are more likely to act on these proclivities when the situation provides cues that their harassing behavior might go unnoticed or unpunished. For example, when social norms are "loose" such as when a supervisor engages in questionable behavior toward female employees, other men with harassing proclivities might act on those cues to engage in harassing conduct themselves. Pryor developed and validated the Likelihood to Sexually Harass (LSH) scale to measure the proclivity to engage in quid pro quo sexual harassment which has been used to support his Person X Situation Theory (Pryor, 1987; Pryor et al., 1995). Other research has found that modifications of it can measure the harassing proclivities of women as well (Perry, Schmidtke & Kulik, 1998; Williams et al., 2017; Stockdale, Gilmer, & Dinh, 2019).

Other research emerged identifying other personality traits predicting sexual harassment, such as honesty-humility and narcissism, which highly correlates with the LSH (Lee, Gizzarone, Ashtone, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, Besser, Morag, & Campbell, 2016). More importantly, Pryor et al. (1995) have also found that these studies using the Person

X Situation model seem to have an important overarching theme: sexually harassing behavior may have occurred due to a possible psychological association between power and sex. In fact, Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, and Strack (1995) empirically tested whether or not there was an unconscious, automatic association between power and sex among men who were high in the likelihood to engage in sexual harassment when primed with power and found that there was a bidirectional link of sex and power. As such, subconscious priming of power was the explanatory mechanism which triggered the power-sex link, thus introducing “feelings of power” (effects of having or obtaining power) as another explanatory mechanism to understanding why SH occurs.

### **Expression of Power**

Similar to sexual harassment, the effects of power have been long studied in various disciplines, dating back in modern times to the 1950’s when French and Raven (1959) created a taxonomy on the bases of power. Since then, many studies have defined power in various ways. In general, power is defined as “asymmetric control over valued resources, which affords one the ability to influence others’ behaviors” (Tost, 2015, p. 35). Much of the literature has focused on power dynamics (or differences in power) and how power stems from pre-existing structures (i.e., societal gender norms, organizational hierarchy, individual-differences). Further, research has examined outcomes of such dynamics and sources of pre-existing power on people who are not powerholders and how it benefits those who are powerholders (e.g., Cleveland & Kerst, 1993; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012). Thus, power can stem from having structural power or having a sense of power, consistent with French and Raven’s (1959) taxonomy where they discuss legitimate power and referent power. Structural power, similar to legitimate power (i.e., in a role that legitimizes power over



others, such as supervisor), is defined as having objective control over resources due to organizational rank. Sense of power, similar to referent power (i.e., charm, charisma or other personal qualities that invites deference from others), is an activation of a cognitive network related to power where an individual's unconscious or conscious awareness of the activation affects their ability to influence others (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Bargh et al., 1995; French & Raven, 1959; Tost, 2015).

More recently, power research has focused on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes on people when they possess power. Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) introduced the theory of approach and inhibition systems of power based on Kipnis' (1976) "metamorphic effects of power." Kipnis argued that possessing power can change people, leading them to exalt one's self view and diminishes view of others. Keltner and colleagues (2003) extended Kipnis's ideas into a modern, psychological theory of power. They proposed that high powerholders map onto the behavioral activation system (BAS) and low power holders map onto the behavioral inhibition system (BIS), two of the most influential systems of personality introduced by Gray (1990). Simply put, the BIS/BAS system is theorized to regulate motives and behaviors in which an individual would approach something desirable (BAS) or avoid something unpleasant (BIS) based on clues from their affective states and cognitive assessments of their situation (Gray, 1990).

Relating the BIS/BAS to the assumptions of the power-approach theory, the approach system is activated in high-power holders rather than in low-power holders due to a higher sensitivity and likelihood of accruing potential personal gains (e.g., material rewards and sex); thus, high-power holders are more likely to engage with or approach

others to achieve such outcomes. In contrast, those with low power have inhibition tendencies, such as less reward consumption and lower sexual desires. Various studies have empirically tested and supported the power-approach theory. For example, individuals who possessed power by being assigned to a managerial role, were more likely to take risky actions (i.e., gambling) in another domain irrelevant to their managerial power role (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), indicating that power leads to action despite the responsibilities that come with the source of power. Additionally, Galinsky and colleagues (2003) found that possessing high power led to taking action for fulfilling personal desires (e.g., possessing more resources). However, some findings addressing power-approach theory were inconsistent, as approach and inhibitory cognition, emotions, and behaviors were found to be dependent on strong situational cues (Hirsh, Galinsky, & Zhong, 2011), goal pursuit (Guinote, 2007), or perceived social distance between others (Magee & Smith, 2013), for example. The agentic-communal model of power, proposed by Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois (2012) builds on the power-approach theory but distinguishes how power affects one's orientation toward the social environment. Broadly, this model states that power can lead to individuals to focus on the self (agentic-oriented) or with the consideration of others (communal-oriented), in line with the original constructs of agency and communion as introduced by Bakan (1966). Additionally, Rucker et al. (2012) associate agentic behaviors with high power holders, and communal behaviors with low power holders, thus implying that the catalyzing effects of power (in general) can also be a source of motivation towards focusing on others' needs, rather than being able to only catalyze selfish and agentic behaviors as suggested by the power-approach theory. Furthermore,

Tost (2015) challenged Rucker et al.'s (2012) assumption that only high power is associated with agentic behaviors and only low power is associated with communal behaviors, as the consequences of possessing power (high or low) can lead to the activation of the agentic, communal, or both types of behaviors. Thus, following Tost's (2015) idea that power can lead to a combination of agentic and communal cognition and behaviors, I elaborate in the following sections the various pathways power can be enacted within the workplace, tying in how both pathways can operate simultaneously in a sexual harassment scenario.

### ***Power, agency, and sexual harassment***

A robust finding in the power literature is that power is highly associated with agentic behaviors (Tost, 2015), especially in the workplace. In this paper, the terms “agency” and “communal” will be used following Rucker and colleagues' (2012) usage, such that agency and communal are terms defining whether one is focused on the self (agentic) or on others (communal). In general, agency is a broad concept that is related to a person's ambitions, striving for personal independence and control over their environment (Abele, Uchrowski, Suitner, & Wojciszke, 2008), which can be manifested in self-serving and punitive behavior. Examples of such agentic behavior include devaluing and punishing others (Kipnis, 1973), aggression (Fast & Chen, 2009), sexual aggression (Lapierre, Spector, & Leck, 2005; Williams et al., 2017), bullying (Lim & Cortina, 2005), and sexual harassment (Bargh et al, 1995; Cleveland & Kerst, 1993). A large extant body of literature within the power and sexual harassment domain assert that power leads to approach-related, agentic behaviors in support of Keltner and colleague's (2003) power-approach theory, whether it is for sexual gratification (Kuntsman & Maner,

2011), to defend against a status threat in order to maintain the gender hierarchy (Berdahl, 2007), or to maintain dominance over resources (Kipnis, 1973). In sum, approach-related behaviors are enacted for selfish or agentic reasons.

The power-approach theory posits that power will enable a person to act in trait consistent ways (Keltner et al., 2003). Indeed, there exists empirical evidence that individuals who are dispositioned to act in agentic ways (e.g., via agentic goal orientation), or have agentic qualities (e.g., narcissism), will in fact act in an agentic manner for their own benefits, especially when primed with power (Bargh et al., 1995; Keltner et al., 2003; Williams et al., 2017). For example, Bargh and colleagues (1995) found that priming men to have power led those with a propensity to harass, to feel powerful, affecting their automatic association with sex and finding their female subordinates attractive. On the other hand, power has also been seen to affect those who are not dispositioned to act in agentic ways or possessing agentic qualities. For example, when individuals, especially those who are typically low in power, are given power (i.e., as managers and supervisors), they are more inclined than those typically high in power to sexually harass their subordinates or coworkers (Williams et al., 2017). These instant feelings of power align with Keltner et al.'s (2003) theory in which power has affective influences which map onto the BAS, leading to approach-related behaviors (e.g., sexual harassment). Stockdale, Gilmer, and Dinh (2019) conceptually replicated these findings, concluding that power priming, when focused on selfish reasons, activated a path to harassment intentions primarily through *feeling* agentic and sexy, especially for those whose personality would not normally be linked to harassment proclivities [e.g., those

low in Dark Triad malevolent personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy; Paulus and Williams, 2002)].

In conclusion, research on power and personality has found that power facilitates trait-consistent goals as well as opening behavioral activation pathways among people who do not normally identify or have power (e.g., Williams et al., 2017 and Stockdale et al., 2019).

### ***Power, communion, and sexual harassment***

Power can also be a source of good for others. Power can enhance and increase one's prosocial tendencies, particularly among those who are high in communal-orientation (e.g., altruistic traits) (Mills & Clark, 1982), to benefit others (Chen et al., 2001; Côté, Kraus, Cheng, Oveis, Van der Löwe, Lian & Keltner, 2011), one's community (Galinsky et al., 2003), and society as a whole (Magee & Langner, 2008). In general, communion is a broad concept that is related to a person's ambitions to focus on others' needs in order to develop close relationships and a sense of community (Abele et al., 2008), which can be manifested with altruistic behavior. For example, Chen et al. (2001) found that those who were communally-oriented and placed in a high-power position acted in a more altruistic fashion, compared to individuals who were motivated by an exchange relationship (i.e. exchange-oriented) where rewards are expected.

Tost (2015) distinguished the conditions under which power produces agentic, self-focused behavior and when it produces communal, responsibility-focused behavior. In general, she stated that power can elicit both conscious and unconscious processes, which in turn affect how power is manifested. Specifically, structural power, such as being in a position of authority over others makes one's power conscious and salient. As

such, power holders sense a duty to be responsible for others over which they control. Conversely, psychological power, which can be triggered by the trappings of power (e.g., status symbols, deference by others), is unconscious, which increases the likelihood of selfish, agentic, and un-prescribed behaviors such as sexual harassment. In sum, under conditions of unconscious activation, power can activate agentic, self-focused, hedonistic behavior such as sex-based harassment. Under more controlled conditions, such as being in a structural position of authority, power may evoke a sense of responsibility over others. In other words, the automatic association of power with agentic behaviors will be overridden and diminished when an responsibility is evoked from possessing structural power, making them consciously aware of their responsibility-focused duties, according to Tost (2015).

Hershcovis et al. (2017) experimentally tested Tost's (2015) proposition that responsibility-focused structural power will increase responsibility motives. They primed research participants to experience either high-power by putting research participants in a supervisory role, or lower power by assigning them to the role of a coworker or subordinate role. Participants then witnessed an episode of a workplace incivility. High power participants were more likely to intervene to stop the incivility, which the authors argued was a communally-oriented behavior. These actions were mediated by a sense of responsibility toward one's subordinates (Hershcovis et al., 2017). Stockdale et al. (2019) also conceptually tested Tost's (2015) proposition, which failed to find supporting evidence. In their study, participants who were primed with responsibility-focused power increased sex harassment proclivities towards their subordinates, which was facilitated by communal feelings. Specifically, both self-focused and responsibility-focused power

increased sexy-powerful feelings, an agentic feeling state, which in turn increased harassment proclivities. However, responsibility-focused power also had the effect of increasing communal feelings, which also increased harassment proclivities. Indeed, Tost (2015, pp. 36) argued that “one can be both highly agentic and highly communal,” such that, perhaps a perpetrator of sexual harassment can be highly communal (e.g., high scores in communal feelings and goal orientation) and highly agentic (e.g., wanting to engage in sexual harassment). This theory that agency and communion are orthogonal constructs which can act independently of each other may partially explain the paradoxical findings by Stockdale et al. (2019) in which responsibility-focused power led to feelings of responsibility, yet still motivated agentic behaviors (i.e., SH). However, there is a lack of research identifying the mechanisms explaining the activation of this power paradox. That is, power researchers would have hypothesized that responsibility-focused power and communal feelings would have decreased intention to harm others (e.g., sex harassment). Hence, the present research aims to answer the critical question on why positive expressions of power (responsibility-focused power) results in socially unacceptable acts (sexual harassment). In an attempt to answer this question, I explore moral licensing as a possible explanation.

### **Power and Moral Licensing**

Moral licensing theory states that people who recall previous moral behaviors or socially acceptable behaviors become more comfortable later displaying behaviors that are deemed less moral, immoral, or socially undesirable (Miller & Effron, 2010). More specifically, people engage in these licensing behaviors when they are confident that this will not affect, or discredit, their moral self-image. This licensing effect has been

empirically tested in various contexts. For example, in the domain of prejudice, Monin and Miller (2001) found that individuals who established themselves as non-racists in a first task later enacted a more prejudiced decision. Specifically, when participants chose a Black applicant for a job that is considered as a neutral job (i.e. consultant) in the first task, they then rated a White candidate (rather than a Black candidate) as better suited for a different job (i.e. police officer) for their second task. In another example, in the domain of prosociality, Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan (2009) found that individuals who recalled a past moral action were less likely to engage in prosocial behaviors (e.g., donating to charity or volunteering), whereas those who recalled a past immoral action reported a greater likelihood to engage in prosocial behaviors. Moral licensing can be used as a form of moral self-regulation, in which individuals believe they are acting in morally consistent ways. Self-regulating one's moral self-concept is a widely shared phenomenon among people due to an inherent need to feel like their moral image is being upheld (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, 2009).

Research has identified two underlying mechanisms for engaging in moral licensing: Moral crediting (balancing doing good deeds with engaging in transgressions) and moral credentialing (re-construing transgressions more favorably) (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010; Miller & Effron, 2010). Much of the literature on moral licensing does not test whether certain licensing behaviors occur via crediting or credentialing (see review by Mullen & Monin, 2016). However, in one study distinguishing between the model of moral crediting and moral credentialing, Effron and Monin (2010), found that licensing using moral crediting occurs when the good deeds and the transgression (blatant or ambiguous) occur in different domains, whereas moral credentialing occurs when the



transgression is ambiguous or when prior good deeds and subsequent transgression were ambiguous *and* in the same domain, thus allowing a more favorable interpretation of a transgression. As an example, someone who donates money to charity will later engage in adultery via moral crediting, as the good deed (donating money) and transgression (adultery) were in different domains. However, prior good deeds and future transgressions that are in the same domain, such as volunteering in the past, but refusing to volunteer in the future, gives rise to hypocrisy, which precludes moral licensing. For moral credentialing, someone who donates to charity could later engage in embezzlement, as the transgression is ambiguous. Notably, studies that test both of these moral crediting and moral credentialing mechanisms simultaneously were conducted from an observer's point of view on whether or not they would license another person's transgression. The authors suggested that that this similar phenomenon can apply to situations where self-licensing can occur (i.e., an individual allowing themselves to transgress via licensing behaviors). A recent study by Lin, Ma, and Johnson (2016) empirically support findings by Effron and Monin (2010), such that effects for moral credentialing were not likely to occur when transgressions were blatant (i.e., abusive behaviors) and left no room for re-interpretation in favor of the transgressor. Instead, Lin and colleagues (2016) found that leaders who engaged in ethical behaviors used such behaviors as "moral credits" in order to engage in deviant and abusive behaviors. All in all, there is empirical evidence that these independent moral licensing mechanisms can operate as simultaneous processes, yet the moral licensing literature often focuses on examining one mechanism.

To summarize, moral licensing is the cognitive act of engaging in socially deviant behaviors after completing a prior good deed, which can occur by moral credentialing or moral crediting. Moral credentialing should occur only when the transgressive behavior is ambiguous. This credentialing effect is expected to be strongest when this ambiguous transgression is within the same domain as one's prior good deeds; however, same-domain licensing was not significant when the ambiguity of the transgression was statistically controlled for in their credentialing model (Effron & Monin, 2010, Study 2). Thus, it is safe to assume that in these contexts, "good deeds should liberate actors to perform morally ambiguous behaviors in *any* domain" (Effron & Monin, 2010, p. 1633). In contrast, crediting occurs when the transgression and prior good deed are in different domains, regardless of the type of transgression (i.e. ambiguous or blatant). Both moral licensing mechanisms have been shown to operate simultaneously. Thus, for this thesis, I argue that feelings of responsibility-focused power, where the actor believes they are using their power for the good of others, may catalyze moral licensing, which will increase actors' intentions to engage in sexual harassment. In the following section, I elaborate on how such moral licensing can be enacted via crediting and credentialing.

In studies that measure power and morality, research has shown that powerful individuals use their power to engage in selfish acts, especially when their need to tend to their moral identity is weak (DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, and Ceranic, 2012), as power can influence disinhibiting effects on immoral behavior (Lammers et al., 2015). As such, when powerful people feel as if they have engaged in previously good deeds and are put in a position in which a transgression may be deemed ambiguous (such as gender harassment or unwanted sexual attention, Rotundo et al., 2001) they may be susceptible

to moral licensing behaviors. Sexual harassment in the form of gender harassment can be seen as ambiguous because of how some perpetrators can use a more subtle form, such as in sexist jokes. Similarly, sexual harassment in the form of unwanted sexual attention where a person's sexual attention and behaviors makes another feel uncomfortable or intimidated, is also often a more subtle and ambiguous form (Gordon, Cohen, Grauer, & Rogelberg, 2005; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Rotundo et al., 2001). Other examples of SH/SBH include repeatedly asking someone out on a date after being rejected, or constantly staring and "checking them out." Thus, engaging in a good deed prior (e.g., looking out for lower level team members) may license a supervisor to engage in transgressions (milder forms of sexual harassment) towards a subordinate via construing the transgression as less morally inappropriate due to its ambiguous nature (that is, moral credentialing). For moral crediting, a supervisor engaging in a good deed (e.g., mentoring) can license them to engage in a transgression (sexual harassment) because it is in a different domain. In other words, a prior behavior may license a transgression because of the ambiguous nature (via moral credentialing), but may also license because the transgression is in a different domain (via moral credits). Perhaps those who are primed with responsibility-focused power feel like they have done good for others and deserve to license behaviors at a later time.

In an effort to explain why Stockdale et al (2019) found that priming people to feel powerful in a responsibility-focused way (compared to a self-focused power prime or a control prime) increased intentions to engage in sexually harassing conduct, this thesis proposes that responsibility-focused power morally licenses actors to engage in or express intentions to engage in sexual harassment. Moreover, this moral licensing

mechanism should be facilitated through high communal feelings. First, as articulated by Keltner et al. (2003), power generally unleashes a behavioral activation system such that powerful people feel less inhibited than others to pursue goals that please them. Further, Tost (2015) explained that powerful people who are in structural roles (e.g., being a supervisor in charge of others) may evoke a more controlled process that allows for them to act in responsible ways, thus being more responsibility-oriented when made aware of their responsibilities as a powerholder. Finally, such powerful individuals may be susceptible to moral licensing, countering these responsibility-focused intentions, as power can also influence disinhibiting effects on immoral behavior (Lammers et al., 2015). This thesis further explores how this moral licensing can occur through a credentialing and crediting process. Indeed, it is important to distinguish the difference between the crediting and credentialing processes to inform future intervention research. Crediting is a more concrete conscious process and thus may be addressed with interventions that can make the actor more aware of the hypocrisy of their behavior. Credentialing, on the other hand, is more subtle and entails a belief that one's moral self is intact regardless of what they do. Here, the intervention may entail efforts to make the actor understand how their transgression is wrong (i.e., make them understand it as more blatant), which could curtail moral credentialing effects. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the possible mechanism explaining why individuals with responsibility-focused power still engage in sexual harassment proclivities as found in Stockdale et al.'s (2019) study, findings contrary to Tost's (2015) theory.

## Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to add a novel explanatory mechanism for Stockdale et al.'s (2019) contradictory findings with powerholders who were primed to feel responsible for others (i.e. responsibility-focused power priming). Given responsibility-focused power can lead to communal feelings, which then activate counterintuitive tendencies, such as sexual harassment, I expect that those who are primed with power that is responsibility-focused (e.g., helping a struggling employee) will similarly lead to communal feelings, which will lead to an increase in sexual harassment proclivities. Additionally, these communal feelings may make the individuals feel like they have done good deeds. Communal feelings is a critical variable in this study, as Tost (2015) has criticized previous priming mechanisms for not eliciting the processes in which responsibility-focused power should elicit—feelings of connectedness and an obligation towards others. Thus, communal feelings (i.e. feeling altruistic, connected to others, helpful, etc.) should be increased for those primed in a responsibility-focused power priming condition, compared to control.

*H1a: Responsibility-focused power, compared to control, will lead to an increase in communal feelings.*

Indeed, previous studies have found that people who were primed to feel like they embody characteristics similar to communalism, such as compassion and generosity, (Sachdeva et al., 2009), were more likely to engage in moral licensing behaviors. Such feelings produced by prior good deeds (for those in the responsibility-focus priming condition) may feel an inflated moral self-image due to “crediting” their “moral bank.” In turn, these moral credits can be exchanged for transgressions in another domain, such as

sexual harassment proclivities to gain sexual access to a coworker, despite such behaviors being socially inappropriate.

*H1b: High communal feelings will increase moral crediting.*

*H1c: Moral crediting will increase SH proclivities.*

*H1d: Communal feelings and moral crediting will serially mediate the relationship between responsibility-focused power and SH proclivities, such that higher communal feelings will lead to higher crediting beliefs, which in turn, increases SH proclivities. See Figure 1.*

Since both moral licensing mechanisms can operate simultaneously, responsibility-focus power priming could also lead to a credentialing effect. Specifically, communal feelings produced by responsibility-focused power may reinforce one's moral self-image, allowing them to engage in moral credentialing beliefs, especially when the transgression is ambiguous (sexual harassment via unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment). That is, participants who feel highly communal from engaging in prior good deeds as a responsible powerholder will misinterpret such behaviors as more socially appropriate via moral credentialing. In turn, these moral credentialing beliefs will lead to an increase of sexual harassment proclivities. Thus, I hypothesize (See Figure 2):

*H2a: Responsibility-focused power, compared to control, will lead to an increase in communal feelings.*

*H2b: Communal feelings will increase moral credentialing.*

*H2c: Moral credentialing will increase SH proclivities.*

*H2d: Communal feelings and moral credentialing will serially mediate the relationship between responsibility-focused power and SH intentions, such that higher*

*communal feelings will lead to higher credentialing beliefs, which in turn, increases SH proclivities.*

## CHAPTER 2. METHODS

### Participants

U.S. adult Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers who were at least 18 years or older, a U.S. resident, or working at least part-time, agreed to participate in this study ( $N=494$ ). Participants were compensated \$2.00 for completing the online study, which was designed to be completed in 20 minutes or less. The survey included two data integrity checks: (a) an open-ended question that was meant to reveal whether MTurk participants were U.S residents and (b) a multiple-choice manipulation check (i.e., “In the scenario you just read, which of the following statements is true?”). For both of these checks, 59% of the sample passed, yielding a final sample of 293. Of these, 178 (60.8%) identified as male (115 as female, 39.2%), 211 (72%) as non-Latinx White, 32 (10.9%) as Black or African American, 19 (6.5%) as Latinx, 13 (4.4%) as Asian, 12 (4.1%) as Black Latinx, 3 (1%) as American Indian or Alaska Native, 2 (.7%) as White/Asian, 2 (.7%) as White/American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1 indicated “other” without specifications.

### Measures and Materials

#### *Control and Validation Variables*

**Sexy-Powerful Feelings.** Stockdale et al. (2019) developed a scale titled Sexy-Powerful feelings from a Principal Axis factor analysis with Varimax Rotation of the modified communal and agentic goal orientation scales from Diekman et al. (2011) plus four items measuring sexy feelings (e.g., sexy, attractive). Findings indicated a 2-factor model with items from sexy feelings and powerful feelings (based on a subset of Diekman et al.’s agentic goal orientation scale) loading on one factor, accounting for 31% of the variance. Items measuring communal feelings, described below, loaded on a



second scale, accounting for 21% of variance. Although sexy-power feelings and communal feelings mediated different contrasts among the priming scenarios and their measures of sexual harassment proclivities, these two variables were positively correlated in their two samples ( $r=.54$  and  $r=.56$ ) (Stockdale et al., 2019). Therefore, I included sexy-powerful feelings as a control variable in the present study. Participants rated the extent to which they felt feelings such as sexy, attractive, powerful,  $\alpha = .92$ . A full copy of the scale is in Appendix A.

**Daily Stress.** Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, so a daily stress measure was included in the beginning of the survey before participants were randomized into a power priming condition. A brief version of the Profile of Mood States (POMS-15; Cranford, Shrout, Iida, Rafaeli, Yip, & Bolger, 2006) included five subscales [anger ( $\alpha = .66$ ), anxious ( $\alpha = .80$ ), depression ( $\alpha = .73$ ), fatigue ( $\alpha = .87$ ), and vigor ( $\alpha = .76$ )] with three items each. Participants rated the extent they experienced these moods in the last 24 hours on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely). Each subscale was scored by averaging their respective items. Each mood scale served as a control variable to ensure our power priming condition did not confound with other feeling states due to the pandemic.

**Affect.** The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) is included to validate that power priming condition increases positive affect but not negative affect, as theorized by Keltner et al (2003). Participants rated the extent that they felt positive affect (e.g., excited or interested) and negative affect (e.g., distressed or upset) on a Likert-scale from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (very much).

### ***Sexual Harassment Proclivities***

Participants completed either the male or female version of the Workplace Crush Scenario (WCS; Williams et al., 2017). The WCS asked about a variety of behaviors in domains such as inappropriate touching (e.g., I will squeeze Matt/Melanie's butt when s/he walks by); inappropriate comments (e.g., I will suggest that Matt/Melanie wear a particular outfit to an upcoming conference because it is "very physically flattering."); inappropriate looks and gestures (e.g., I will wink at Matt/Melanie during a work meeting); inappropriate requests for sexual favors (e.g., I will offer Matt/Melanie a workplace perk in exchange for sex); as well as less inappropriate behaviors (e.g., I will ask for Matt/Melanie's cell phone number). Following Stockdale et al.'s (2019) methodology, I used their shortened version of Williams et al.'s (2017) WCS, only using 14 items instead of 52, which were selected by domain sampling. The shortened version of the WCS used at least one item from each of these domains. In the WCS, participants were asked to read a scenario in which they have a crush on another team member, who does not reciprocate their flirting, and to assume that both they and the object of their crush were secure in their work positions. Participants rated how likely they would engage in various behaviors presented in the 14 items (10 inappropriate behavioral items, 4 appropriate behavioral items) toward their crush object on a scale of 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (very likely). WCS was scored by calculating the average of the inappropriate items (e.g., "I will stare at Matt/Melanie for a long time"),  $\alpha = .93$  (Stockdale et al., 2019). This version of the WCS has been validated in Stockdale et al.'s (2019) study by demonstrating that the power priming manipulation produced the same effects of sexual

harassment proclivities regardless of using the shortened WCS or a shortened version of Pryor's (1987) LSH. A copy of the shortened WCS is in Appendix A.

### ***Communal Feelings***

The communal feelings scale was adapted and modified from the communal goal orientation scale from Diekmann, Clark, Johnston, Brown, and Steinberg (2011), to have the participants rate each feeling about themselves after reading their randomly assigned scenario. Specifically, participants rated the extent to which they felt caring, helpful, connected to others, altruistic, responsible for others on a Likert-scale from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (very much).  $\alpha = .80$  (Stockdale et al., 2019). See Appendix A for full scale.

### ***Moral Licensing***

**Moral Crediting.** Moral licensing via *crediting* was measured using Lin, Ma, and Johnson's (2016) five-item moral credits measure,  $\alpha = .97$ . Participants were instructed to think about the scenario they just read while answering the five statements (e.g., "Acting good built up my account of moral credits) on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A copy of both moral licensing scales is in Appendix A.

**Moral Credentialing.** Moral licensing via *credentialing* was measured using an adapted version of Effron and Monin's (2010) construal measure to assess transgressions related to sexual harassment. In Effron and Monin's (2010)'s study, participants were randomly presented with a scenario that depicted a transgression (sexual harassment or racial discrimination) that was either blatant or ambiguous in nature. In these scenarios, the participants were in a role of an observer of the transgression, and not as the transgressor. After reading the scenarios, but before evaluating how much they would

condemn (or license) the transgression, the participants were instructed to evaluate the behaviors of the alleged harasser/discriminator and identify whether or not they believed the behavior in the scenario represented racial discrimination or sexual harassment, depending on the condition they were assigned to, on a scale of 1 (definitely not) to 7 (definitely). As expected, in the ambiguous conditions, construal of the scenario as sexual harassment and racial discrimination negatively mediated the effects of condemning the behavior. In other words, construing the scenario as not constituting harassment or discrimination was associated with lower ratings of condemnation of the alleged transgressions. That is, observers were moral licensing transgressions via credentialing.

For this thesis, I am interested in how priming responsibility-focused power may increase one's communal feelings, which may give individuals a sense of feeling morally upstanding since they are primed to think about doing good deeds for others in their role as a supervisor. In such a state, people may be less likely to construe a morally questionable action (such as an ambiguous form of sexual harassment) as morally inappropriate, compared to the control with no responsibility-focused power-priming. In order to measure whether participants may be credentialing themselves in this way, I asked them to examine several behavioral examples of the more ambiguous forms of SH—gender harassment (via sexual hostility) and unwanted sexual attention (Rotundo et al., 2001). Specifically, I adapted five items from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1988) by having participants rate the extent to which they believe each sexual harassment behavior was inappropriate on a scale of 1 (definitely inappropriate) to 7 (definitely appropriate). In an attempt to disguise the principal construct overlap of sexual harassment as a construal measure with sexual harassment as

a behavioral outcome measure (WCS), I also included other workplace behavior scales, some of which measure forms of workplace deviance and others measure pro-social workplace behavior. Specifically, I included items from a scale of incivility (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001, original  $\alpha = .89$ ); workplace deviance (interpersonal) scale (Bennett & Robinson, 2000, original  $\alpha = .78$ ) and organizational citizenship behavior-interpersonal (Lee & Allen, 2002, original  $\alpha = .83$ ). Moral credentialing was scored by averaging the scores of the five SEQ items.

**Pilot Test for the Moral Credentialing Measure.** To validate that the SEQ-based moral credentialing measure was sensitive to moral licensing effects, I conducted a pilot test using a well-researched method for creating moral licensing effects (see Khan and Dhar, 2006, Study 1). Specifically, prior good deeds (real or imagined) occur when participants recall or imagine engaging in volunteer activities and then further demonstrate a commitment to such behavior by selecting a new domain in which to enact volunteering and state their reasons for doing so. Indeed, one can simply imagine doing good even if they do not follow through and enact moral licensing (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010). Khan and Dhar (2006) found that compared to control conditions, recalling or imaging such prior good deeds were associated with moral licensing (via credentialing) their volunteering behavior with choosing luxury items with less guilt.

In my pilot study, 105 participants recruited from Amazon Mturk (61% male,  $M$  age = 35.4,  $SD = 10.51$ ) were randomly assigned to a credentialing or control condition. In the credentialing condition, they were instructed to imagine that they had been volunteering in their community for the past four months for three hours a week. Then, to increase their commitment to this prosocial behavior, they selected a new domain of

volunteering and record their reasons for the choice (“teaching children in a homeless shelter” or “improving the environment”) and to state reasons for their choice. In the control condition, participants were asked to imagine that they have been going grocery shopping once a week over the past four months. Then, were asked to choose one of two grocery stores in which they would be interested in shopping at and to state reasons for their choice. After being randomly assigned to either the volunteer scenario or grocery shopping scenario, participants completed the 20-item moral credentialing scale described above measuring how appropriate it would be to engage in the behaviors on the scale. The key subscale of interest comprising the moral credentialing measure consisted of the 5 items from the SEQ measuring sexual harassment behavior. Reliability was  $\alpha = .97$ .

An independent sample t-test was conducted for condition on moral credentialing, revealing that sexual harassment behaviors were construed as more appropriate for those in the credentialing condition ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD= 2.12$ ) than those in the control condition ( $M=2.16$ ,  $SD= 1.70$ ),  $t(103)=2.63$ ,  $p=.010$ . Given the results of this pilot test, I concluded that the SEQ-items modified to measure appropriateness of engaging in harassing conduct can serve as a measure of moral credentialing.

### ***Priming Scenarios***

Power priming methods have been under constant scrutiny over the years (Anderson & Brion, 2014; Guinote & Vescio, 2010; Tost, 2015). The primary methods are semantic and recall primes, role assignment, and measuring one’s subjective sense of power. The most common method, the recall prime, by Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee (2003) where one is required to recall and describe a situation where they had power, is

criticized for its inability to evoke the structural role one might be in when they feel powerful, and would not provide the underlying mechanism for responsibility-focused power (Tost, 2015). Similarly, the semantic prime, where one is required to complete a word search task or a word scramble, only allows for unconscious activation of power priming, also lacking the ability to evoke structural role-based norms of someone who holds power. Thus, studies that have used these primes were more likely to find negative effects of power since they evoke a sense of powerfulness but were not designed to evoke a sense of responsibility due to the absence of priming the individual with a structural power role (Tost, 2015). Compared to these common primes, the current power priming method involves a scenario-based prime which involves having participants put themselves in an organizationally-relevant situation in which they have both structural power (i.e., in a supervisor role where they mentor and evaluate an underling) and an awareness of their responsibilities to reach goals for the benefit of the team. This provides the participant the opportunity to feel responsible for others, which should lead the participants to engage in communal behaviors, according to Tost (2015). The scenarios are as follows:

**Responsibility-focused power:**

Today you woke up feeling refreshed, took a 30-minute walk with your dog, and made sure you scheduled his vet appointment. At work, you met with a group of senior leaders to pitch a proposal for an important strategic initiative that, if successful, will not only significantly help the firm reach its goal to be a "best place to work", but it will also position your team members for important engagements in the future, which will be great for their careers. One of the senior leaders listening to your pitch expressed skepticism about your proposal and asked very challenging questions. At first, you were not sure how to respond, but then you found your stride and were able to show how the strategic initiative will benefit everyone in the firm as well as the firm's clients. You could see by the looks on others' faces that they were impressed by how deeply you were thinking about your team and the firm as a whole.

Later in the day, you finished your performance reviews of your direct reports. One of them has been off the mark all year and hasn't hit their numbers. You decided that you are going to give them extra attention and mentoring so they have a better understanding of how to better leverage their true talents. You know that the firm really values leaders who take personal responsibility for the professional development of their mentees.

After work you had an iced tea with your administrative assistants, Kathy and Mark, at the cafe on the first floor of your building.

**Control scenario:**

Today you woke up and rolled out of bed. You read the newspaper for 30 minutes. You showered and got dressed. At work, you met with a group of senior leaders to listen to a pitch of a proposal for an important strategic initiative that, if successful, will not only significantly help the firm reach its goals, but will also make the firm more profitable. One of the senior leaders listening to the pitch expressed skepticism about the proposal and asked very challenging questions. At first, the presenter was not sure how to respond, but then they found their stride and give convincing responses. You could see by the looks on others' faces that they are impressed with the presenter.

Later in the day, you finish your performance reviews of your direct reports. One of them has been off the mark all year and hasn't hit their numbers. You decide that you are going to set this review aside and work on it another day.

After work, you had an ice tea at the cafe on the first floor of your building.

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited on MTurk via a recruitment script, which outlined the study information, study protocols, and eligibility requirements (18 years or older, U.S. resident, and working at least part-time). Interested participants were then directed to a web survey via Qualtrics, where they were given more details about the study purpose and procedures, risks/benefits, payment, and confidentiality. Participants were also given an option to download a copy of the study information sheet and consent form. After



agreeing to participate in the study, eligible participants were asked to complete the daily stress measure. Then they were randomized to control (no power) condition or a responsibility-focused power condition (described above). Participants were instructed to read their respective scenarios and were only able to choose to move on after a time elapse of 30 seconds. After priming, participants completed follow-up questions about their feeling states (PANAS, communal feelings, sexy-powerful feelings) and the moral crediting scale. Next, participants were randomized by their gender and sexual orientation into a version of the WCS that corresponds to the likely gender of a romantic partner. For example, participants who identified as heterosexual men or a lesbian woman completed a WCS where the gender of the crush in the scenario was a woman. Afterwards, participants completed the moral credentialing scale. Finally, participants completed demographic items [age, nationality (if non-U.S., years of residing in the U.S.), educational attainment, and race/ethnicity].

## CHAPTER 3. RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

All participants indicated that they were at least 18 years old, working at least part-time, and a U.S. resident. To ensure data integrity, I included an open-ended question (i.e. “What do you classify a student who is in their second year of high school?”) that was meant to reveal whether participants were U.S. residents, as suggested by Moss and Litman (2018). Consequently, 112 (22.7%) participants failed to answer the prompt excluding them from the sample (i.e., they wrote “nice,” “very good,” “thanks,” and/or clearly copied and pasted statements). Additionally, I included a multiple-choice manipulation check (i.e. “In the scenario you just read, which of the following statements is true?”), excluding 89 (23%) participants who failed to choose the correct answer depending on their randomly assigned condition. A crosstab chi-square analyses was conducted to determine whether participant exclusion from the manipulation check systematically differed between conditions, resulting in no significant difference,  $\chi^2(1, 382) = .366, p = .55$ . As a result, the final sample was 293 participants.<sup>3</sup>

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities for all measures are displayed in Table 1. As expected, communal feelings, moral crediting, and moral credentialing strongly correlated positively with sexual harassment proclivities measured with the WCS. There were also positive correlations among these proposed mediating variables (see Table 1). Independent samples t-test for priming condition on communal feelings was conducted, indicating a significant increase of communal feelings for those

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<sup>3</sup> Since the usefulness of manipulation checks has been under constant scrutiny (Hauser, Ellsworth, & Gonzalez, 2018). I ran a separate set of analyses including the 89 participants who failed the manipulation check. Results of the hypothesized models can be seen in Figures 5 and 6 (Appendix B).

in the power-other priming sample ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=.77$ ) versus the control sample ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=.86$ ),  $t(291)=-7.04$ ,  $p=.000$ . Additionally, a one-way ANCOVA for power priming and sexy-powerful feelings as a covariate on WCS was conducted, exhibiting a significant effect of power priming condition after controlling for sexy-powerful feelings,  $F(1, 291)=5.29$ ,  $p<.05$ . As expected from the power-approach theory (Keltner et al., 2003), the power priming condition increased positive affect,  $t(291)=-6.51$ ,  $p=.000$ . In contrast, negative affect should not be affected by power priming, and indeed was not,  $t(291)=1.38$ ,  $p=.17$ . Results of  $t$  tests of priming condition on study variables are shown in Table 2. Altogether, these preliminary findings support hypothesis testing for serial mediation.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

Two separate sets of Model 6 from Hayes' (2018) PROCESS macro was used to test serial mediation for moral crediting and moral credentialing, as hypothesized in Figure 1 (Hypothesis 1a-d) and Figure 2 (Hypothesis 2a-d). Sexy-powerful feelings and POMS subscales were included as covariates in each model. Indirect effects were estimated through a 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval with 10,000 samples.

Hypotheses 1a-1d were supported. Specifically, responsibility-focused priming, compared to control, increased communal feelings,  $b=.51$ ,  $t(293)=6.88$ ,  $p<.001$  (Hypothesis 1a); communal feelings increased moral crediting,  $b=.18$ ,  $t(293)=2.53$ ,  $p=.01$  (Hypothesis 1b); moral crediting increased WCS,  $b=.42$ ,  $t(293)=4.23$ ,  $p<.000$  (Hypothesis 1c); and finally, for Hypothesis 1d, there was a significant indirect effect (i.e., the 95% confidence interval did not cross 0) of power priming on WCS via

communal feelings and moral crediting (.04; 95% CI: [.01, .08]). See Figure 3.

Responsibility-focused priming (compared to control) also led to an increase in moral crediting,  $b=.22$ , not mediated by communal feelings,  $t(293)=2.26$ ,  $p=.02$ . Thus, there was an indirect effect of priming condition on WCS via moral crediting, independent of communal feelings (.09; 95% CI: [.02, .19]). The direct effect of power priming condition on WCS was not significant,  $b=-.14$ ,  $t(293)=-.86$ ,  $p=.39$ . In sum, responsibility-focused power (compared to control) increased communal feelings, which increased moral crediting, leading to an increase of sexual harassing behaviors.

Hypotheses 2a and 2c were supported. Hypothesis 2b and 2d, however, were not supported and the observed effects were opposite to what was predicted. Specifically, although responsibility-focused priming, compared to control, increased communal feelings,  $b=.51$ ,  $t(293)=6.88$ ,  $p<.000$  (Hypothesis 1a), communal feelings were negatively related to moral credentialing,  $b=-.27$ ,  $t(293)=-2.15$ ,  $p=.03$  (Hypothesis 2b), despite those variables being positively correlated at the zero-order level,  $r=.15$ ,  $p<.01$  (see Table 1). Moral credentialing increased WCS,  $b=.69$ ,  $t(293)=15.98$ ,  $p<.000$  (Hypothesis 2c). There was a significant, *negative*, indirect effect (i.e., the 95% confidence interval did not cross 0) of power priming on WCS via communal feelings and moral credentialing (-.09 ; 95% CI: [-.18, -.02]; Hypothesis 2d). This indirect effect was opposite of what was predicted. Instead of increasing moral credentialing, communal feelings reduced ratings on the moral credentialing scale. Therefore, responsibility-focused power (vs control) decreased sexual harassment proclivities through the negative relationship between communal feelings and moral credentialing. See Figure 4. Responsibility-focused priming (compared to control) did not directly increase in moral credentialing,

independent of communal feelings,  $b=-.09$ ,  $t(293)=-0.51$ ,  $p=.61$ . Thus, there was not an indirect effect of priming condition on WCS via moral credentialing, independent of communal feelings ( $-.06$ ; 95% CI:  $[-.29, .18]$ ). The direct effect of power priming condition on WCS was not significant,  $b=.01$ ,  $t(293)=.08$ ,  $p=.93$ . In sum, contrary to my expectations, those who were in the control group (who were not primed to feel powerful) showed higher levels of sexual harassing behaviors compared to those in the power prime. This was due to lower, rather than higher, levels of communal feelings. Thus, lower levels of communal feelings predicted more credentialing beliefs (i.e. believing that sexual harassing behaviors were appropriate to engage in), which in turn, increased sexual harassing behaviors. Put differently, responsibility-focused power reduced the effect of moral credentialing on sexual harassing behaviors by producing high levels of communal feelings, whereas the control group had higher levels of sexual harassment proclivities because they had lower levels of communal feelings (compared to responsibility-focused power group), which in turn, increased moral credentialing beliefs, and these beliefs translated into greater sexual harassment intentions.

### **Exploratory Analyses**

Decades of research suggests that gender of the perpetrator play an important role in sexual harassment incidences, such that men are likely to be perpetrators of sexual harassment (for a review, see Pina et al., 2009; Rotundo et al, 2001). Thus, for exploratory purposes, I ran a moderated serial mediation analyses predicting sexual harassment proclivities using PROCESS Model 92 with 10,000 bootstrap resamples. Priming condition was the independent variable, participant gender was the moderator, and communal feelings and moral crediting were mediators. Daily stress subscales

(POMS-15; Cranford et al., 2006) and sexy-powerful feelings were control variables.

Gender was tested as a moderator only on the moral crediting model since there was full support for that model (Hypotheses 1a-1d), whereas the moral credentialing model received only partial support. Overall, there were no gender differences. Specifically, for priming condition  $\times$  gender on communal feelings,  $b=-.21$ ,  $SE=.15$ ,  $t(293)=-1.40$ ,  $p=.16$ ; for communal feelings  $\times$  gender on moral crediting,  $b=-.03$ ,  $SE=.10$ ,  $t(293)=-.27$ ,  $p=.79$ ; for moral crediting  $\times$  gender on WCS,  $b=-.07$ ,  $SE=.16$ ,  $t(293)=-.40$ ,  $p=.69$ ; and for priming condition  $\times$  WCS,  $b=-.29$ ,  $SE=.31$ ,  $t(293)=-.95$ ,  $p=.34$ . In addition, there were no direct effects of gender on the mediators or the dependent variables, such that gender on communal feelings was  $b=.03$ ,  $SE=.11$ ,  $t(293)=.25$ ,  $p=.81$ ; gender on moral crediting was  $b=.19$ ,  $SE=.36$ ,  $t(293)=.53$ ,  $p=.60$ ; and gender on WCS was  $b=.34$ ,  $SE=.22$ ,  $t(293)=1.49$ ,  $p=.14$ . In conclusion, there were no gender differences on the mediators or the dependent variables, indicating that women and men are both likely to engage in sexual harassment and that the effects of responsibility-focused power priming through communal feelings and moral crediting were similar for both women and men.

## **CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION**

Since the #MeToo movement began in 2017, powerful people that many people regarded as moral, likeable, and upstanding in their communities were accused and/or convicted of engaging in sexually harassing behaviors, causing outrage and confusion. Indeed, Stockdale and colleagues (2019) found evidence for this perplexing phenomenon – feeling powerful and responsible for others led to sexual harassment proclivities. The purpose of the present study is to extend Stockdale and colleagues' (2019) study, examining the role of moral licensing as an explanatory mechanism of why and how responsibility-focused powerholders indicate intentions to engage in sexual harassing behaviors. Specifically, this study explored two possible moral licensing mechanisms: crediting and credentialing. Results confirmed that priming people to feel powerful in a way that emphasized responsibility and care for others (responsibility-focused power) increased their sexual harassment proclivity through communal feelings and moral licensing via crediting. Interestingly, I found an opposing effect with the moral credentialing model. Whereas communal feelings, produced by responsibility-focused power priming increased moral crediting, such feelings decreased moral credentialing. Possible explanations for these opposing effects are discussed later.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The present study builds on the power-approach theory (Keltner et al., 2003), which states that when people feel powerful, they feel compelled to act for selfish or self-enhancing purposes, rather than avoid acting. Specifically, this study shows that this tendency to act can entice “good” people to act improperly (via moral crediting). Tost (2015) theorized that the automatic association of power with agentic behaviors, such as

engaging in sexual harassment, can be overridden by a sense of responsibility (which she posits will occur when actors have structural power, such as being a supervisor). Responsibility evokes leadership behaviors that focus on considering others' interests and needs. Indeed, Herscovis et al. (2017) found that powerholders who felt responsible (compared to being a non-powerholder such as a coworker) were more likely to intervene or confront a perpetrator during an incident of incivility (i.e., low-intensity deviant acts such as behaving condescendingly) between two employees at work. However, my study found that responsibility-focused power priming did not lead to a decrease in sexual harassment proclivities, and in fact increased those proclivities through a psychological pathway involving communal feelings and moral crediting. Consistent with moral licensing theory, participants who construed their power as responsibility for others, which is characterized as a positive manifestation of power (Herscovis et al., 2017; Tost, 2015), perceived that they had built up moral credits, which in turn, increased their intentions to engage in sexual harassment. Thus, despite the good that may come from responsibility-focused power (as demonstrated by Herscovis et al., 2017), it may also have the insidious effect of increasing harm to others.

It is important to note that although both moral crediting and moral credentialing were positively associated with sexual harassment, responsibility focused power (through communal feelings) increased the likelihood of intending to sexually harass through the moral crediting route. However, it decreased the likelihood of intending to sexually harass through the moral credentialing route because of the negative relationship between communal feelings and moral credentialing. Thus, there is also some evidence supporting Tost's (2015) theory and findings from Herscovis et al (2017). Powerful people who



were given a sense of responsibility were also capable of mitigating agentic behaviors (i.e., believing sexual harassment is inappropriate via the moral credentialing model). Specifically, attempting to combat the self-oriented nature of power through evoking a sense of responsibility and communal feelings may mitigate the corrupt effects of having power. It may be possible that participants, when feeling an increased consideration of others, are more sensitive to their actions, thus decreasing moral credentialing. This sensitivity of one's actions or being focused on the well-being of others can possibly make them more aware that others are dependent on them, thus recognizing that others' needs and perspectives are important (Tost, 2015) and acting more compassionate toward others (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Hence, these communal feelings may have made participants more aware of the inappropriateness of sexual harassing behaviors, thus decreasing such behaviors.

In addition to the power construal and sexual harassment literature, this study also contributes to the moral licensing literature. Research testing moral licensing usually tests one or the other form of moral licensing separately, therefore, it is hard to discern which licensing mechanism is responsible for inducing licensing (Mullen & Monin, 2016). In this study, both crediting and credentialing were measured at the same time to determine how both mechanisms may affect transgressive intentions, and I found opposing effects. Responsibility-focused power increased moral crediting directly as well indirectly through heightened communal feelings, which increased participants' willingness to engage in sexual harassment. However, responsibility-focused power, through communal feelings, decreased potential moral credentialing effects.

There are several reasons for these disparate findings. First, although the conditions in this study were optimal for finding moral crediting effects, they were sub-optimal for finding moral credentialing effects. Second, an additional process – psychological entitlement – may have been operating in different ways for moral crediting and moral credentialing. Finally, the construct validity and hence the measurement of moral credentialing may be unsettled. I elaborate on each of these explanations below.

Moral crediting and moral credentialing occur under different contexts, according to Effron and Monin (2010). Moral crediting should occur when prior good deeds and the subsequent transgression are in a different domain, regardless of whether the transgression is blatant or ambiguous. For example, people who engaged in sustainable shopping (i.e. purchasing domain), later engaged in lying and stealing more money than they earned from engaging in the prior task (i.e. honesty domain) (Mazar & Zhong, 2010). In the present study, the prior good deeds (mentoring a struggling employee and looking after the team) were in a different domain as the transgression (sexually harassing a coworker). Hence, participants balanced their transgressive behavior against knowledge that they engaged in a prior good deed. In contrast, moral credentialing should occur when the transgressive behavior is ambiguous. For example, people who engaged in endorsing anti-sexual harassment policies, later licensed ambiguous acts of sexual harassment (Efron & Monin, 2010). Notably, this credentialing effect is strongest when this ambiguous transgression is within the same domain as one's prior good deeds (Efron & Monin, 2010, Study 2). In these contexts, participants believe that they are good upstanding people because of their prior history of behaving in moral ways. Further,

they believe that ambiguous transgressive acts are not bad or immoral because they have credentialed themselves as good people. In the present study, although the transgressive behavior was ambiguous (mild forms of unwanted sexual attention toward a coworker), it was in an arguably different domain as the prior good deeds (being responsible for subordinates' success). Thus, the conditions of this study were more optimal for finding a moral crediting effect of responsibility-focused power rather than a moral credentialing effect.

Second, moral licensing theorists have proposed that moral licensing and psychological entitlement (i.e. what a person thinks they “deserve”; Naumann et al., 2002) are similar concepts. In moral crediting models, research has shown that those who have an inflated sense of self tend to permit themselves to transgress to maintain a “moral equilibrium” (Zhong et al., 2009). This is accomplished through feeling entitled to such transgressions (e.g., “I feel entitled to act bad because I have acted good in other ways”). In contrast, moral credentialing does not occur due to inflated sense of self, as they already believe they have a moral self-image. Specifically, when people feel as if their sense of morality is an important and rare trait (i.e. they feel that are uniquely righteous or deserving), they are likely to feel entitled to err because they do not construe their errant ways as wrong, which is the definition of moral credentialing (Yam et al., 2017). Put differently, those who morally license via credentialing do so because of the expectation, or an entitlement, for special treatment as they believe their moral and ethical attributes are rare compared to others. In these cases, one may believe thoughts such as, “I am more moral than anyone else; therefore, I can do no wrong.” In the current study, responsibility-focused powerholders may have felt entitled to transgress because

they had been primed to believe they were good people. These high communal feelings for participants in the responsibility-focused power condition created an inflated sense of one's moral self-image which led to a feeling of entitlement to engage in sexual harassment – i.e., they earned moral credits. However, these communal feelings may have also increased the salience of their duty to care for others; therefore, they did not feel like they had a uniquely self-righteous sense of self. Thus, they did not construe harassing behavior towards a coworker as appropriate, compared to those in the control condition. Indeed, recent research has found that moral credentialing was negatively related to entitlement. In Loi and colleagues (2020, Study 1), they found that when participants felt they embody good characteristics (e.g., being honest and kind) from volunteering for a group or organization, they felt less entitlement. As such, when one does not feel communal toward others (i.e. from being exposed to the control condition), they did not feel a psychological connection towards others; therefore, they felt that sexually harassing behaviors were not inappropriate (higher moral credentialing beliefs), which was associated with greater likelihood to engage in sexual harassment. Thus, it may be the lack of communal feelings (not being forced to be responsible for others via responsibility-focused power) that produced a sense of entitlement. Future research should continue examining the link between psychological entitlement and moral licensing for a deeper understanding of the nuances between the two moral licensing processes, especially among those who hold powerful positions.

Lastly, moral credits and moral credentials are generally examined separately, with more empirical research on the moral crediting model (for a review, see Mullen & Monin, 2016). Thus, compared to its well-researched counterpart, moral credentialing is

less well-known and understood. Furthermore, both moral licensing mechanisms are seldom tested concurrently (for exceptions, see Effron & Monin, 2010; Lin et al., 2016; Loi et al., 2020). Moreover, moral credentialing has been operationalized in different ways. Effron and Monin (2010) used a construal measure, in which participants measured how much they would condemn (or license) sexual harassment transgressions they read about. The moral credentialing measure used in this study was created following this construal measure. Lin and colleagues (2016) and most recently, Loi et al. (2020) measured moral credentialing with a measure of moral self-regard, which participants were asked how much they embodied a set of nine moral traits (e.g., honest, kind, etc). Loi et al. (2020) found opposing results with their moral credentialing measure, similar to my results. Hence, the meaning and measure of moral credentialing appears to be unsettled in the literature. Although the measure was created following Effron and Monin (2010)'s method and validated in a pilot test, confidence in interpreting these results is limited as the construct of moral credentialing and its measurement have not been well-developed empirically. Additionally, it is possible that the SEQ-based measure of moral credentialing in this study did not capture the construct as originally intended, despite the pilot study results.

Altogether, findings from this study contribute to research on potential effects of behavior when embodying responsibility-focused power, and the role of moral licensing motivating seemingly moral people to become perpetrators of SH. Ultimately, understanding how moral licensing influence ones' sense of power and behavioral disinhibition can further guide us into developing individual-based intervention to mitigate SH prevalence. Future research may also consider other individual differences

that can promote responsible or moral behavior, such as moral cleansing (i.e., engaging in behaviors to restore a moral self-image due to past transgressions; West & Zhong, 2015).

### **Practical Implications**

Responsible leadership, an umbrella term that encompasses leadership theories which promote social and ethical responsibility among leaders, has gained increasing interest over the years in management literature (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018). Scholars have identified responsibility, “feel[ing] an inner obligation to do the right thing toward others” as key to leadership effectiveness (Waldman & Galvin, 2008, p. 328). However, findings from this study indicate that leaders who construe power as responsibility must be weary of the potential nefarious effects. Indeed, research has shown that CEOs who have engaged in prior corporate responsibility strategies will later license their behavior by subsequently engaging in corporate social irresponsibility (e.g., inconsistently donating to charity) (Ormiston & Wong, 2013). Organizations should consider implementing structures that make powerful entities accountable by enforcing ethical conduct and monitoring of such conduct by other powerful peers. Perpetrators of sexual harassment may also benefit from sexual harassment training to better identify the ambiguous forms of sexual harassment (e.g., gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention), which in turn may lessen moral credentialing as this will help re-iterate that such behaviors are socially inappropriate and even hypocritical. Sexual harassment training that emphasizes the moral discrediting nature of engaging in such conduct can also aid in diminishing licensing behaviors, as individuals are less likely to engage in moral licensing if it will signal something that will tarnish their moral self-image (Jordan, Mullen, & Murnighan, 2011). Training on value-based leadership, such as ethical

leadership, may also be helpful in guiding moral cognitions and self-regulating moral behavior.

In addition, training must occur concurrently with other structural changes, such as accountability structures, to potentially avoid further moral licensing effects. Indeed, Kaiser and colleagues (2013) found that when an organization has a diversity structure (e.g., diversity training) in place, high status groups (white men) do not take diversity concerns of underrepresented groups seriously, despite concrete evidence of inequity. In fact, these diversity structures convince high status group members that underrepresented groups are being treated fairly, when this is not the case. It is possible that the credentials that the companies convey via the presence of diversity structures can cause high status groups to morally license their need to address the efficacy of diversity initiatives. For example, because of the presence of diversity credentials via diversity structures, high status group members may think that there is no need to support victims of inequity due to their presumption that underrepresented groups are being treated more fairly at such companies versus companies with no diversity structures. In other words, because of the presence of these diversity structures, high status group members are morally licensing the good deed of the company (i.e., having diversity structures) and acting in subsequently deviant ways (i.e., more likely to derogate a minority with a discrimination complaint or not believe the complaint is valid).

### **Limitations**

No study is without limitations. There is potential threat to internal validity of the research design since it was conducted completely online via self-report questionnaires. However, MTurk workers self-report data has been seen as reliable (for a review, see

Thomas & Clifford, 2017). Although crowdsourcing online samples, such as MTurk, have grown over the years due to advantages in recruiting participants that are more diverse with higher quality data than college samples and community samples (Berinsky et al., 2012), recently there has been an emerging concern about poor quality data. CloudResearch (formally TurkPrime, an integrated platform with MTurk that allows ease for social science and behavioral research) tracked the data quality issue as stemming from foreign workers using tools such as virtual private networks (VPNs) to hide their true location and take surveys that are designed for U.S. participants (Moss & Litman, 2018). Consequently, as recommended by Moss and Litman (2018), I included a data quality measure (i.e., cultural check question) to find such persons to remove their fraudulent data. I also limited participation in the study to U.S. MTurk workers who had a 95% or higher approval rate in their prior Mturk tasks (e.g., surveys). Approximately 23 percent of the data were found to be poor in quality due to the fraudulent responses found in the cultural data integrity check. Thus, such participants had to be removed from the sample in order to increase data quality of the final sample, as cultural check questions have shown to help increase data quality (Litman et al., 2018; Moss & Litman, 2018). However, using other recruitment strategies or conducting a field study to replicate these results may increase confidence in these results.

Additionally, the power priming study vignette method is fairly new, thus I recommend pursuing different power priming approaches to test robustness of responsibility power priming across different priming mechanisms. Although the current priming method provides the participant the opportunity to feel responsible for others, which should lead the participants to engage in communal behaviors, according to Tost



(2015), other priming methods that put participants in a structural power role in a responsible manner should also be examined. In her analyses of power manipulation methods, Tost (2015) found that the recall prime developed by Galinsky et al (2003) can evoke positive emotions on communal dependent variables. However, she criticizes such studies for its inability to evoke the intended structural power role one might be assigned to, since it elicits a sense of personal power instead. Thus, it is important that the recall prime is set in a context where the participant is aware of their responsibilities, similar to the priming scenarios in the present study. Furthermore, it may be a promising avenue to tease apart the power priming paradigm used in this study versus paradigms that may not have the communal or “warmth” component (such as the role manipulation or recall prime) to see if findings in this study replicate with more commonly used priming mechanisms, keeping in mind Tost’s (2015) recommendations. Future research may want to explore the effects of responsibility-focused power on sexual harassment proclivities using other power manipulation methods, such as behavioral condition in which participants actually engage in responsibility-focused supervisory behavior (e.g., taking responsibility for the interests of team members) compared to a control condition. Moreover, when pursuing this research avenue, researchers should keep in mind the optimal conditions in which the moral licensing mechanisms operate. Future researchers might also consider whether the effects of responsibility-focused power found in this study could replicate with other harmful behaviors, such as workplace incivility (e.g., lower intensity behaviors such as being rude towards others), counterproductive workplace behaviors (e.g., theft), and unethical business practices (e.g., exploiting employees).

## **Conclusion**

The current study shows the importance of understanding responsibility-focused power in sexual or sex-based harassment incidences, emphasizing the ironic effects of having such power. This study emphasizes the need to consider the role of moral licensing, which contributes to understanding how perpetrators of SH is not only defined by “bad actors,” but those who may very much so intend to do good. However, this study also found contradictory effects with a purported measure of moral credentialing, which calls further construct clarification and better measurement tools. Altogether, a better understanding of responsibility-focus power and moral licensing among perpetrators of SH will better inform future interventions.

## TABLES

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and inter-correlations among study variables.

Variables	Control <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Power-Other <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
a. WCS	3.00 (1.67)	2.87 (1.63)	(.95)												
b. Communal Feelings	3.15 (0.86)	3.82 (0.77)**	.22**	(.80)											
c. Positive Affect	3.14 (0.99)	3.82 (0.78)**	.29**	.82**	(.89)										
d. Negative Affect	2.00 (0.93)	1.85 (0.97)	.61**	.04	.07	(.90)									
e. Moral Crediting	3.33 (0.97)	3.76 (0.84)**	.42**	.50**	.56**	.17**	(.92)								
f. Moral Credentialing	2.36 (1.74)	2.12 (1.60)	.80**	.15**	.20**	.73**	.28**	(.95)							
<u>Exploratory Variables</u>															
g. Gender (male)	0.68 (0.47)	0.53 (0.50)	.19**	.00	.60	.17**	.12*	.22**	--						
<u>Control Variables</u>															
h. Anxious	2.51 (1.14)	2.63 (1.11)	.20**	.08	.02	.48**	-.01	.30**	-.06	(.86)					
i. Depressed	2.30 (1.09)	2.30 (1.09)	.24**	.05	.04	.53**	.01	.36**	-.03	.80**	(.82)				
j. Anger	2.15 (1.07)	2.14 (1.05)	.35**	.09	.06	.58**	.07	.45**	.03	.74**	.76**	(.83)			
k. Fatigue	2.55 (1.15)	2.47 (1.12)	.20**	.04	-.05	.46**	-.05	.29**	-.09	.72**	.67**	.65**	(.86)		
l. Vigor	2.85 (0.98)	2.67 (1.04)	.44**	.25**	.34**	.34**	.30**	.45**	.18**	-.02	-.02	.16**	-.05	(.75)	
m. Sexy/Powerful Feelings	2.77 (0.99)	3.03 (0.89)*	.53**	.65**	.74**	.29**	.57**	.44**	.16**	.15*	.19**	.25**	.07	.46**	(.90)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$  (2 tailed). WCS=Workplace Crush Scenario.

Table 2. Results of t tests of power priming condition and study measures.

Variables	<i>t</i> (291)	<i>p</i>	95% CI
a. WCS (1-7)	.65	.52	[-.25,.51]
b. Communal Feelings (1-5)	-7.04	.00	[-.86,-.48]
c. Positive Affect (1-5)	-6.51	.00	[-.88,-.47]
d. Negative Affect (1-5)	1.38	.17	[-.07,.37]
e. Moral Crediting (1-5)	-4.07	.00	[-.64,-.22]
f. Moral Credentialing (1-7)	1.25	.21	[-.14,.63]
<u>Control Variables</u>			
g. Anxious (1-5)	-.90	.37	[-.38,.14]
h. Depressed (1-5)	.03	.98	[-.25,.25]
i. Anger (1-5)	.08	.94	[-.24,.25]
j. Fatigue (1-5)	.60	.55	[-.18,.34]
k. Vigor (1-5)	1.46	.14	[-.06,.41]
l. Sexy/Powerful Feelings (1-5)	-2.41	.02	[-.48,-.05]

## FIGURES

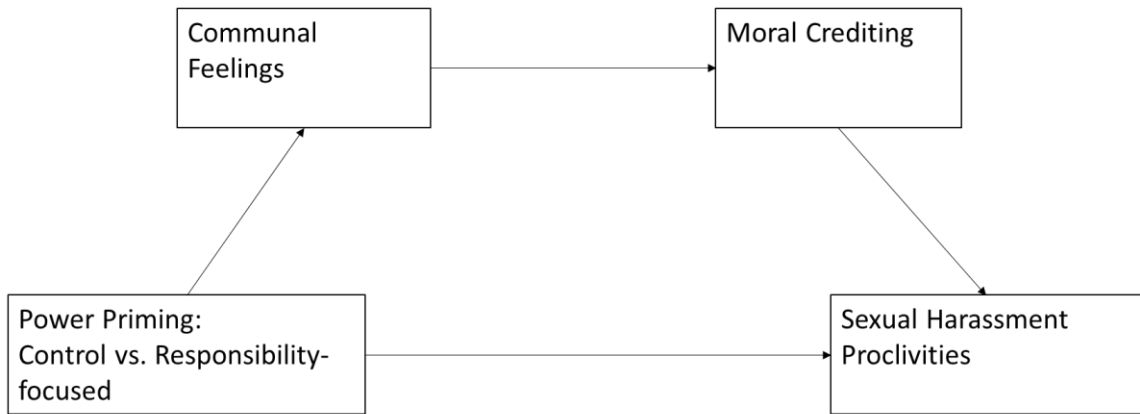


Figure 1. Hypothesized serial mediation model of power priming on sexual harassment proclivities (measured by WCS) via communal feelings and moral crediting.

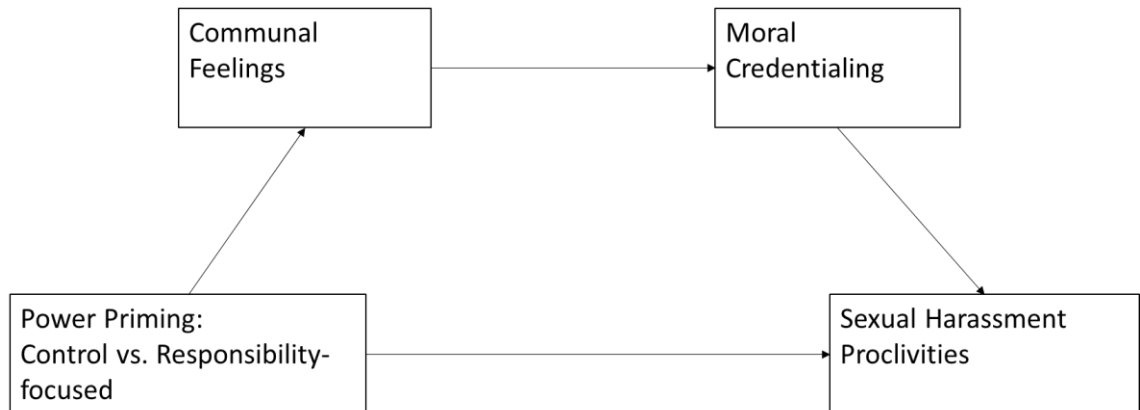
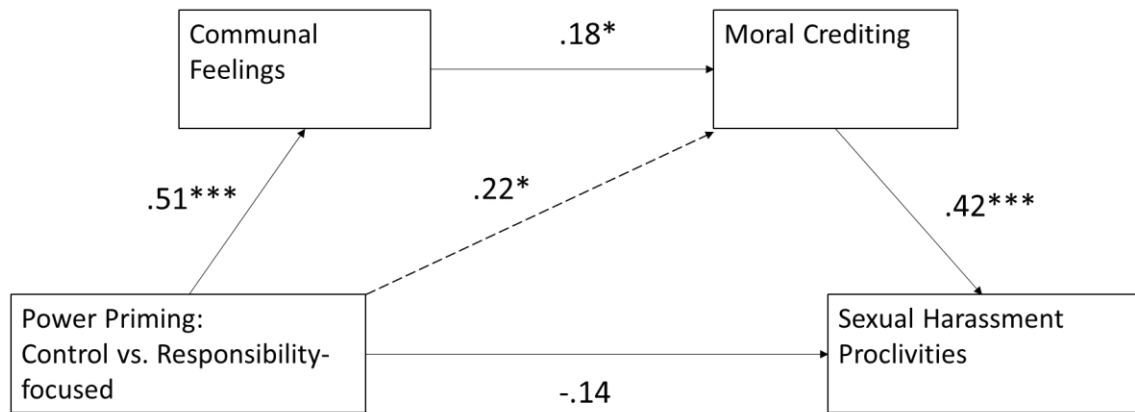


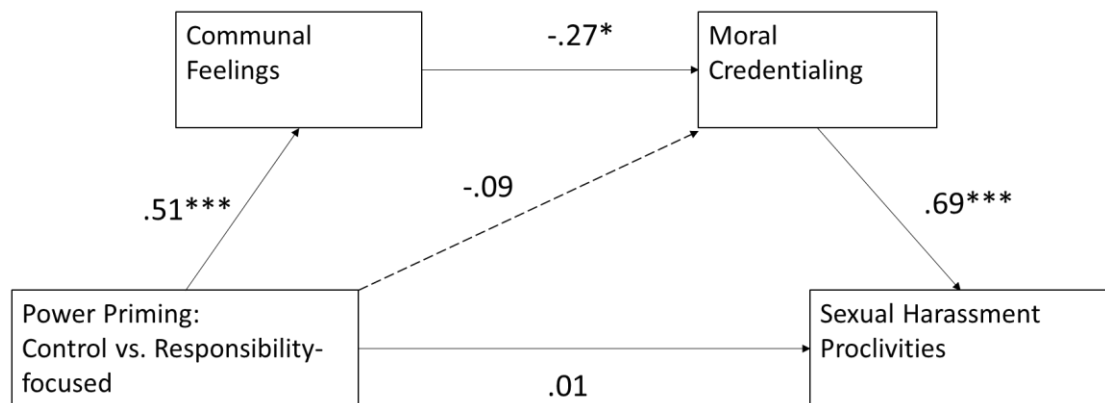
Figure 2. Hypothesized serial mediation model of power priming on sexual harassment proclivities (measured by WCS) via communal feelings and moral credentialing.



**Indirect effect: .04; CI:[.01 to .08]**

Figure 3. Serial mediation of power priming on sexual harassment proclivities (measured by WCS) via communal feelings and moral crediting.  $N = 293$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



**Indirect effect: -.09; CI:[-.18 to -.02]**

Figure 4. Serial mediation of power priming on sexual harassment proclivities (measured by WCS) via communal feelings and moral credentialing.  $N = 293$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## APPENDIX A: MEASURES

### Communal Feelings

INSTRUCTIONS: Think about yourself in this scenario, rate the extent to which you would feel each of the following emotions or thoughts about yourself after a day like this.

1	2	3	4	5
Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much

1. Caring
2. Helpful
3. Connected to others
4. Altruistic
5. Responsible for others

## Sexy-Powerful Feelings

INSTRUCTIONS: Think about yourself in this scenario, rate the extent to which you would feel each of the following emotions or thoughts about yourself after a day like this.

1	2	3	4	5
Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much

1. Sexy
2. Attractive
3. Powerful
4. Hot
5. Appealing
6. Strong
7. Distinctive
8. Deserving recognition
9. High status
10. Competitive



### **Moral Licensing: Crediting**

INSTRUCTIONS: Continue thinking about the scenario you just read. For the following questions, please rate how much you agree with each statement about yourself.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. I earned credit for performing a morally praiseworthy behavior.
2. My previous good deeds earns me credit as a moral person.
3. Acting good built up my account of moral credits.
4. Each good deed I performed added to my moral credit.
5. Acting in an ethical manner gave me a surplus of credit.

### Workplace Crush Scenario (Female Target/Male Target)

INSTRUCTIONS: You are a team supervisor at your company. You find one of your team members, Melanie/Matt, to be very attractive. Melanie/Matt also has a warm personality and isn't married. You definitely have a crush on her/him. You and Melanie/Matt are both secure in your positions at work, so you do not feel like there would be a problem with seeing each other outside of work. You think about her/him a lot and really hope that something will happen between you. So far, however, Melanie/Matt hasn't responded to your flirting.

What will you do about Melanie/Matt? Please indicate how likely you would be to enact each behavior below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all likely	Moderately unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely or unlikely	Somewhat likely	Moderately likely	Very likely

1. I will continue to ask Melanie/Matt on dates even after she/he has said no.
2. I will invite Melanie/Matt to join a group of colleagues who are going to see a movie after work, but make sure it is really only the two of us who go.
3. When the two of us are working together, I will position my chair extremely close to hers/his.
4. I will stare at Melanie/Matt for a long time.
5. I will regularly leave flirtatious post-it notes for Melanie/Matt.
6. I will invite Melanie/Matt to go get some lunch with me on my lunch break.
7. I will compliment Melanie's/Matt's looks.
8. I will invite Melanie/Matt to have sex in my private office.
9. I will frequently text Melanie/Matt outside of work hours.
10. I will look Melanie/Matt up and down when I pass her in the hallway.
11. I will touch Melanie's/Matt's arm when speaking.

12. I will bring my vacation pictures to show Melanie/Matt, many of which show me in swimming suit/swimming trunks.

13. I will go to a work happy hour that Melanie/Matt is also attending.

14. I will start dressing more nicely at work than I did before.

*Note: Items 6, 7, 13, and 14 are appropriate behaviors and are not included in the WCS scale.*

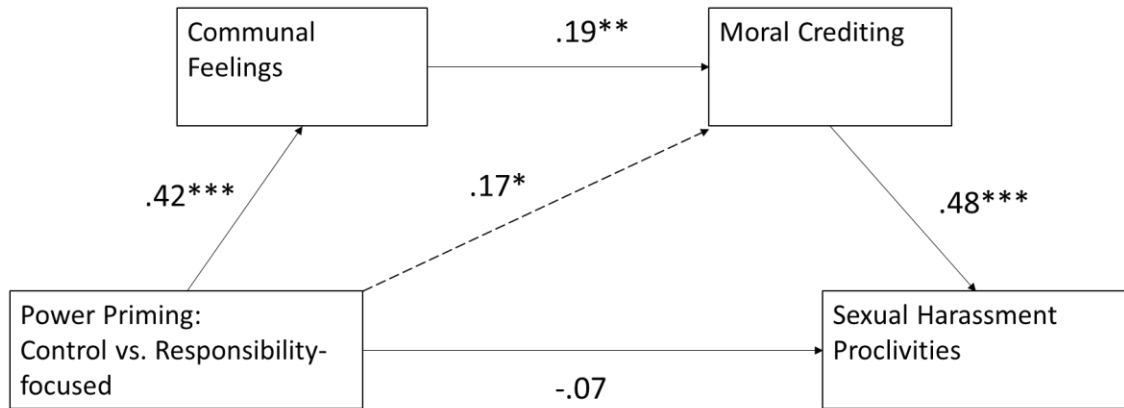
## **Moral Licensing: Credentialing**

INSTRUCTIONS: The following statements discuss certain behaviors at work. Please read each statement. Then, answer on the scale of 1 (“definitely inappropriate”) to 7 (“definitely appropriate”) in which you think these behaviors are **appropriate to enact in the workplace.**

1. Adjust your work schedule to accommodate your other coworkers’ requests for time off.
2. Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.
3. Give up time to help other coworkers who have work or non-work problems.
4. Assist other coworkers with their duties.
5. Share personal property with others to help their work.
6. Make fun of someone at work.
7. Play a prank on someone at work.
8. Publicly embarrass someone at work.
9. Put down or be condescending to someone at work.
10. Pay little attention to a coworker’s statement or show little interest in their opinion.
11. Make demeaning or derogatory remarks about a coworker.
12. Address a coworker in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately.
13. Ignore or exclude a coworker from professional camaraderie.
14. Doubt a coworker’s judgment on a matter over which they hold responsibility.
15. Make unwanted attempts to draw a coworker into a discussion of personal matters.
16. Make attempts to draw a coworker into a discussion of sexual matters.
17. Make remarks about a coworker’s appearance, body, or sexual activities.
18. Make gestures or used body language of a sexual nature at work.
19. Make attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with a coworker despite their efforts to discourage it.
20. Make unwanted attempts to stroke, fondle, or kiss a coworker.

*Note: Items 16-20 are the SEQ-based items of interest that were used to measure moral credentialing of SH.*

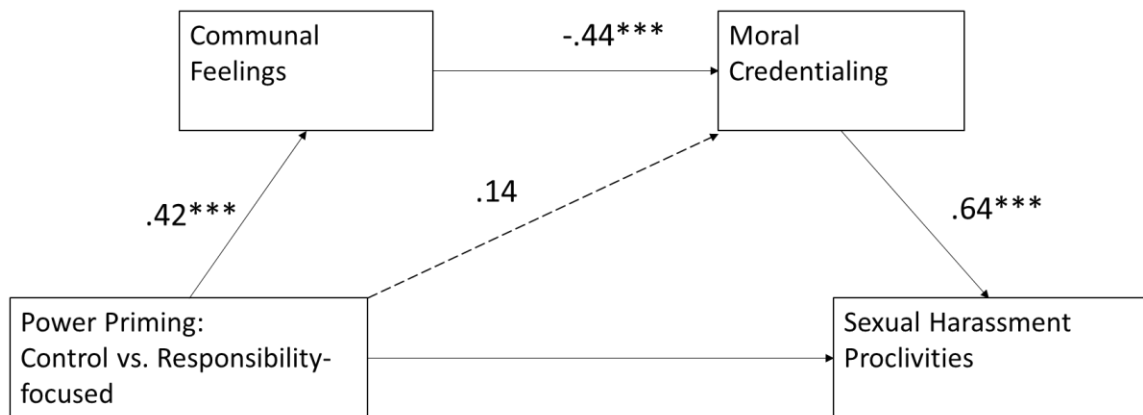
## APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS



*Indirect effect: .04; CI: [.01 to .08]*

Figure 5. Serial mediation of communal feelings and moral crediting on sexual harassment proclivities within sample including participants who failed manipulation checks ( $N = 382$ )

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



*Indirect effect: -.12; CI: [-.20 to -.06]*

Figure 6. Serial mediation of communal feelings and moral credentialing on sexual harassment proclivities within sample including participants who failed manipulation checks ( $N = 382$ )

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

TUYEN K. DINH

### EDUCATION

- Present                    **Ph.D., Applied Social and Organizational Psychology**  
Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
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### AWARDS & ACADEMIC HONORS

- 2019                        Diversity Graduate Student Travel Award, SPSSI (\$500)
- 2019                        Graduate Student Paper Talk Award, Midwestern Psychological  
Association
- 2019                        Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Scholar
- 2018                        Presidential Diversity Fellowship, IUPUI (\$50,000)
- 2016                        Cum Laude, University of Houston
- 2014 – 2016              Dean's List, University of Houston
- 2013                        Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholarship (\$18,000)
- 2013                        Top Ten Percent Scholarship (\$2,500), University of Houston
- 2013                        IESI Progressive Waste Scholarship (\$1,000)
- 2013                        Marguerite Edwards Scholarship (\$1,000)

### MANUSCRIPTS

Amber, B., **Dinh, T. K.**, Lewis, A. N., Trujillo, L. D., & Stockdale, M. S. (2019). Fueling the #MeToo movement: Why national media on sexual misconduct triggers recall of past sex harassment experiences. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*.

Stockdale, M. S., Gilmer, D. O., & **Dinh, T. K.** (2019). Dual effects of self-focused and other-focused power on sexual harassment intentions. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-09-2018-0160>

### BOOK CHAPTERS

Stockdale, M. S., **Dinh, T. K.**, Amber, B., Lewis, A. N., & Trujillo, L.D. (submitted). Reconciling status threat and power theories of approach and rejection sexual harassment: Implications for research and intervention. In Magley, V. J. & Burke, R. J. (Eds). *Research Handbook of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*.

## PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH

Amber, B., **Dinh, T. K.**, & Stockdale, M. S. (2020, June). Acute Power Unleashes Non-Sexist to Sexually Harass. In T. K. Dinh & M. S. Stockdale (Chairs), *Advancing the #MeToo Agenda: Sexism in the Workplace*. Symposium conducted virtually at the annual conference of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Austin, TX.

**Dinh, T. K.** & Stockdale, M.S. (2020, June). *Advancing the #MeToo Agenda: Sexism in the Workplace*. Symposium to be conducted the annual conference of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Austin, TX.

**Dinh, T. K.**, Stockdale, M.S., & Gilmer, D. O. (2019, June). When the marginalized harass: Effects of power priming on harassment proclivities of LGB individuals. In A. Folberg (Chair), *Sexism and Sex Assault Research in the Era of #MeToo*. Symposium conducted at the annual conference of The Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues, San Diego, CA.

**Dinh, T. K.**, Stockdale, M. S., & Gilmer, D. O. (2019, April). Acute Power Unleashes Nonsexist People to Harass. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, IL.

Gilmer, D. O., **Dinh, T. K.**, & Stockdale, M. S. (2019, April). *From #MeToo to What Now: The Problem of Sex Harassment*. Symposium conducted at the annual conference of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, National Harbor, MD.

**Dinh, T. K.**, Gilmer, D. O., & Stockdale, M. S. (2019, April). *From #MeToo to What Now: Search for Solutions*. Symposium conducted at the annual conference of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, National Harbor, MD.

Stockdale, M. S., Gilmer, D. O., & **Dinh, T. K.** (2019, April). Good and evil: Dual effects of power on likelihood to sexually harass. In M.S. Stockdale, D. O. Gilmer, & T. K. Dinh (Chairs), *From #MeToo to What Now: Search for Solutions*. Symposium conducted at the annual conference of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, National Harbor, MD.

## REVIEWING EXPERIENCE

Ad Hoc Journal Reviewer

Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record: Introduction to Industrial/Organizational Psychology (Spring 2020)

Teaching Assistantships:

Introduction to Psychology (Fall 2019)

Introduction to Industrial/Organizational Psychology (Fall 2019)